"That's the main road," said George, peering down through the windshield. "We'll be there in ten minutes .... Just as well, it's getting light . . . ."

A faint pinkish glow was visible along the horizon to the east.

Fred brought the car lower, and Harry saw a dark patchwork of fields and clumps of trees.

"We're a little way outside the village," said George. "Ottery St. Catchpole."

Lower and lower went the flying car. The edge of a brilliant red sun was now gleaming through the trees.

"Touchdown!" said Fred as, with a slight bump, they hit the ground. They had landed next to a tumbledown garage in a small yard, and Harry looked out for the first time at Ron's house.

It looked as though it had once been a large stone pigpen, but extra  
rooms had been added here and there until it was several stories high  
and so crooked it looked as though it were held up by magic (which, Harry reminded himself, it probably was). Four or five chimneys were perched on top of the red roof. A lopsided sign stuck in the ground near the entrance read, THE BuRRow. Around the front door lay a jumble of rubber boots and a very rusty cauldron. Several fat brown chickens were pecking their way around the yard.

"It's not much," said Ron.  
"It's wonderful," said Harry happily, thinking of Privet Drive. They got out of the car.

"Now, we'll go upstairs really quietly," said Fred, "and wait for Mum to call us for breakfast Then, Ron, you come bounding downstairs going, `Mum, look who turned up in the night!' and she'll be all pleased to see Harry and no one need ever know we flew the car."

She turned and walked back into the house and Harry, after a nervous glance at Ron, who nodded encouragingly, followed her. The kitchen was small and rather cramped. There was a scrubbed wooden table and chairs in the middle, and Harry sat down on the edge of his seat, looking around. He had never been in a wizard house before.

The clock on the wall opposite him had only one hand and no numbers at all. Written around the edge were things like Time to make tea, Time to feed the chickens, and You're late. Books were stacked three deep on the mantelpiece, books with titles like Charm Your Own Cheese, Enchantment in Baking, and One Minute Feasts - It's Magic! And unless Harry's ears were deceiving him, the old radio next to the sink had just announced that coming up was "Witching Hour, with the popular singing sorceress, Celestina Warbeck."

They slipped out of the kitchen and down a narrow passageway to an uneven staircase, which wound its way, zigzagging up

through the house. On the third landing, a door stood ajar. Harry just caught sight of a pair of bright brown eyes staring at him before it closed with a snap.

"Ginny," said Ron. "You don't know how weird it is for her to be this shy. She never shuts up normally -"

They climbed two more flights until they reached a door with peeling paint and a small plaque on it, saying RONALD'S ROOM.

Harry stepped in, his head almost touching the sloping ceiling, and blinked. It was like walking into a furnace: Nearly everything in Ron's room seemed to be a violent shade of orange: the bedspread, the walls, even the ceiling. Then Harry realized that Ron had covered nearly every inch of the shabby wallpaper with posters of the same seven witches and wizards, all wearing bright orange robes, carrying broomsticks, and waving energetically. "Your Quidditch team?" said Harry.

"The Chudley Cannons," said Ron, pointing at the orange bedspread, which was emblazoned with two giant black C's and a speeding cannonball. "Ninth in the league."

Ron's school spellbooks were stacked untidily in a corner, next to a pile of comics that all seemed to feature The Adventures of Martin Miggs, the Mad Muggle. Ron's magic wand was lying on top of a fish tank full of frog spawn on the windowsill, next to his fat gray rat, Scabbers, who was snoozing in a patch of sun.

Harry stepped over a pack of Self-Shuffling playing cards on the floor and looked out of the tiny window. In the field far below he could see a gang of gnomes sneaking one by one back through the Weasleys' hedge. Then he turned to look at Ron, who was watching him almost nervously, as though waiting for his opinion.

"It's a bit small," said Ron quickly. "Not like that room you had with the Muggles. And I'm right underneath the ghoul in the attic; he's always banging on the pipes and groaning ......  
But Harry, grinning widely, said, "This is the best house I've ever been in."

Ron's ears went pink. .